Community plants over 1,000 native trees at local heritage site

Monday 25 March, 2024

On Saturday 23rd March, 100 members of the local community came together to plant over 1,000 native trees at Butser Ancient Farm, a not-for-profit heritage site and open air museum in East Hampshire.

Participants were encouraged to immerse themselves in nature, with talks and walks on native trees and wild foraging, as well as hands-on nature-based activities to make clay and pebble art with leaves and paints. Participants were also given the opportunity to take part in a community tree blessing, tying ribbons to trees to celebrate and give thanks to nature.

Butser worked with local community groups to make the free event inclusive, and particularly encouraged attendees from deprived areas of the community. The day was presided over by Hampshire MP Damian Hinds and Petersfield town crier Faye Thompson, and was supported by Butser volunteers.

Katherine Brooks, volunteer coordinator at Butser, said:

'A huge thank you to everyone who joined us! It was a fantastic day and a great example of the power of community spirit. Growing native plants and trees is important in creating biodiversity and helping local wildlife to thrive. We hope this will lead to wider discussions in the community and encourage more planting in the local area.'

All the trees planted were of native species, including crab apple, holly, dog rose, hawthorn, and wild cherry. They will be incorporated into Butser's growing network of native hedgerows, which provide green pathways, safe nesting, and seasonal food for local wildlife.

Imogen Carter, community gardener at Butser, said:

'Conservation and environmental sustainability as never been more urgent, and engaging people with nature is a key step in empowering communities to make a difference in their local area. It's amazing to have had the opportunity to expand our range of heritage trees in our historic gardens, and we hope that in reflecting on the past, our community might find natural solutions to combat the climate and biodiversity crisis.'

Building on the success of the tree planting, Butser will also be offering free workshops this May on the ancient wisdom of plants, engaging young people and their families with nature and sharing how plants were used for food, healing, dyeing, and crafts throughout our ancient history. The one-day hands-on workshops will offer nature-based activities, including planting in Butser's historic garden areas, exploring the ancient medicinal uses of healing plants, natural plant-based dyeing, and using plant fibres to produce cordage.

This will be an opportunity to explore how growing native plants and trees is important in creating biodiversity and helping local wildlife to thrive, as participants learn about the benefits of trees and plants. In becoming a nature explorer for a day the children can think about they can protect and nurture the environment.

Participants in both the tree planting and the workshops will also receive access to nature-based informational videos from Butser's video documentary platform Butser Plus.

The Community Tree Planting Day and The Ancient Wisdom of Plants workshop programme is part of a project that is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund **#UKSPF**, as part of East Hampshire District Council's Grow Up! programme.

Butser Ancient Farm is currently open to visitors on weekends and school holidays up to the end of October. It will then reopen in December for a season of magical festive events connecting visitors to the ancient traditions of midwinter.

To find out more you can visit www.butserancientfarm.co.uk and www.butserplus.com

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